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JACK LONDON—WONDER BOY *By T. K. Whipple*

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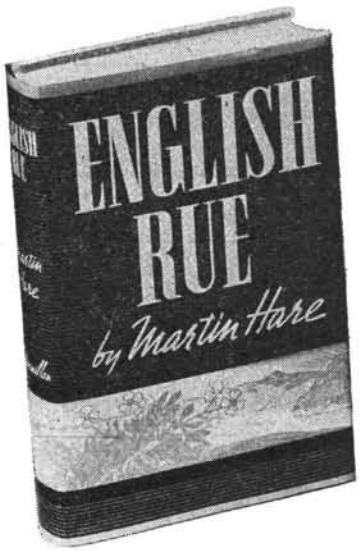

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Jack London—Wonder Boy

BY T. K. WHIPPLE

"I HAVE let Jack London tell his own story* in his own words," says Mr. Stone, presumably to explain the inclusion in his biography of long passages from London without quotation marks. "Where Jack told the truth about himself, no biographer could possibly tell it better or truer. . . . There is nothing of the biographer in 'Sailor on Horseback.'"

In the last sentence Mr. Stone does himself injustice: he has at least got for the first time into print the main facts about London's birth and death—his illegitimacy, and his suicide. But in the main the modesty of Mr. Stone's statement is vindicated, and he has contented himself with reproducing once more his hero's self-portrait. This method, which has been used with the greatest success by Van Wyck Brooks, though with the striking difference that Mr. Brooks has explained his procedure in the body of his books and Mr. Stone has not, is unexceptionable in itself. Its value, however, depends not only on the skill and perspicacity of the biographer, but also on the self-knowledge of the subject, and on that point Jack London presents extreme perils. His "self-dramatization," to which Mr. Stone refers, led him so persistently to romanticize and glorify himself that one ends by asking whether he ever "told the truth about himself"—or for that matter, since he equally romanticized the world, about anything. The answer must be that on occasion, when Jack wasn't looking, truth did creep into the corners and crannies of his writing, though almost never when he was contemplating his own image.

The first objection to "Sailor on Horseback" is that London has fooled Mr. Stone as completely as he fooled himself; the second is that the biographer has caught from his subject that falsity of style, of the early-Hollywood, "Came the dawn" school, which was the perfect, the inevitable, expression of Jack's peculiar romanticism—the taste which made him call his wife "mate woman" and himself "God's own mad lover." To these phrases Mr. Stone objects, but seems not to see that this over-pitched, hectic quality infects more or less not only all London's work but his own writing too. Mr. Stone is capable of referring to "life raw and naked, wild and free," and of describing Jack's reading in these terms: "He sank his teeth into the throat of the book, shook it fiercely until it was subdued, then lapped up its blood, devoured its flesh, and crunched its bones. . . ." Mr. Stone is also capable of saying that in the year 1800 humanity "wandered shatter-brained in the miasmic fogs of the Dark Ages." Perhaps these passages are pure London verbatim; but I think that Mr. Stone has gone his hero one better.

Jack London—"a potentially great man, whose possibilities of greatness were almost wholly wasted" . . .

Though "Sailor on Horseback" is the best, being to all intents and purposes the only, life of Jack London to date, it is no "definitive biography"; it shares too fully the delusions, the naiveté, the feverish inflation, the unreliability, of its subject. London needs critical treatment, done from the outside, and he is a figure of enough interest to deserve it.

But to disentangle the facts from his phantasy of himself would be almost impossible. There is no question that he was a precocious boy, with an excellent physique and a brilliant mind, and that as a man he was eminently, even excessively, sociable, generous, kind, and likable; it might as well also be said that he had the writer's gift with words, the literary genius, as well as unfortunately a genius for self-deception. He was, I should judge, a potentially great man, whose possibilities of greatness were almost wholly wasted. His was a double tragedy, public and private: he never did the work he was meant for, and his own life ended in failure. At the root of both lies the phantasy which ruled him—the regressive myth of the primitive, barbaric hero.

The myth, of course, is universal. All boys want to be and play at being outlaws, pirates, highwaymen; no doubt it is part of their resistance to growing up and becoming civilized. And probably there is no harm in living out the myth somewhat in adolescence—there may be good in it. But most grown men put it behind them, except for their reading—how widespread a phantasy it remains in all modern nations there could be no better evidence than Jack London's own popularity. The only thing that distinguishes him from the majority is that he was ruled by it all his life, and that more than other men he wished and was able to live it out. The phantasy which dominated him led him straight away from organized society to "hit the adventure trail"—into oyster piracy on San Francisco Bay, into seal hunting on the Pacific, into hoboing, to the Klondike, to the South Seas. When not entirely beyond the pale, he lived in a pseudo-artistic bohemia. His final effort—to found a vast patriarchal domain—was hardly less

* *SAILOR ON HORSEBACK: THE BIOGRAPHY OF JACK LONDON. By Irving Stone. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.* 1938. $3.

Next Week

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ANIMALS
By W. C. ALLEE
Reviewed by Donald Culross Peattie

POWER
By BERTRAND RUSSELL
Reviewed by Robert Brooks

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primitive than his other ventures. His constant need was to be or at least to imagine himself a swaggering lord of creation, a glorified superman; and by necessity as well as by choice, he was driven, in order to play this role, out of the civilized world. For civilized people he had no use, anyway; they were effete molly-coddles. Darwin, Spencer, Nietzsche all showed him, he thought, the superiority of the blond beast, the Nordic hero.

His personal tragedy sprang, apparently, from his most peculiar trait: his extraordinary combination of a fine body and overfine nerves. Without such a body, he would have had, like most men, to let the phantasy remain a phantasy. Without the overstrung nerves, he would not have driven himself to destruction trying to realize in actuality an adolescent dream. Ordinarily one takes a febrile over-excitement and love of excessive violence to be signs of weakness; but in Jack London they were not—he really did have strength. So likewise in his writing: his fury of language and intemperance of emotion have led some critics to deny that he possesses genuine vigor and power. But to do so is surely an error; those who are not too offended by his excesses can hardly fail to feel his force. Only, in his books as in his own life and character, the strength he had is turned, as if he could realize it only in fighting, coercion, and destruction, not to creation, but to violence. To so little good use did he put his abilities in his work that his intrinsic literary value is not great; mainly he is of interest as a social phenomenon.

London manifests with particular clarity the contradiction, the duality, or two-facedness, which runs through all naturalistic American writers and which is presumably an expression of the basic contradiction in the society from which they came: on the one hand they are extremely social; on the other, highly individualistic. So Dreiser is the former in "An American Tragedy" and the latter in "The Titan." So during the decades when men born in the seventies were growing up, the United States was treated to a riot of unbridled individualism in the business world by the robber barons —thoroughly commonplace men permitted by historic circumstances to enact amazing parts—at the same time that society was being collectivized, by these very same men, as never before. That both elements were strong in Jack London he knew as well as any one, and made no attempt to reconcile them: Marx and Nietzsche reveled side by side in his mind. To be sure, he said: "I am Martin Eden. Martin Eden died because he was an individualist, I live because I am a socialist and have social consciousness." Though in the end he followed Martin Eden to suicide because his social consciousness was too weak to save him, it is true that he did have it and that he was a socialist—about ten per cent of him, at least.

In view of his socialism, nothing is stranger than his treatment of the workers. He liked to call himself one of them, born and bred in the working class, but herein he was, as so often, merely deceiving himself. He came from the bottom —not to say the lunatic—fringe of the middle class, and he was a worker as little as possible, never holding a regular job for more than a few weeks, and always feeling as much contempt as pity for "work beasts." Nor as a writer did he much concern himself with the proletariat; the only important exception is

Charmian (Mrs. London) and Jack London in Honolulu

the first part of "The Valley of the Moon," though it is true also that perhaps his best writing—and his only realism—is to be found in the realistic portraits of minor figures who are proletarians. He was attracted to socialism not because he was a worker, but because he was rebellious, gregarious, and sympathetic, humanitarian and idealistic, because socialist arguments carried intellectual conviction, because he admired some groups of workers for their spirited brawniness, and above all because in the labor movement, as for instance in strikes, he found the violence he loved, and the promise of far more violence to come. In his phantasies of the future dealing with general strikes and such things, it is the violence, not the significance for labor, that he dwells on and gloats over. The career of such a man as Big Bill Haywood, one would think, might have appealed to him as a literary theme; but knowing nothing of the labor movement from the inside, he would in any case have been incompetent to deal with it. Besides, though there was enough of the socialist and enough sympathy with labor in Jack London to establish his connection with the collective side of the society he lived in, his heart and his imagination were really elsewhere.

He was at least ninety per cent individualistic—far more so even than other naturalistic writers, who all, when not showing their characters as helpless victims of social forces, liked to portray them as supermen. For all these writers had heard of Darwin and had read Huxley and Spencer; they all knew about the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest; they all believed, as London did, that they arrived at this view of things by thinking with remorseless logic from the "irrefragable facts" of science. But one must suspect that their observation of the world carried more weight and was more fundamental than their readings in popular science; for never had life been so obviously Darwinian—so naturalistic—as in the American business world of the Gilded Age.

Unlike Dreiser, it is true, London did not fall for the business titan, partly because he was a socialist, but mainly because the values of capitalism always antagonized him: much as he liked to spend money, he detested the qualities which ordinarily lead to money-making. His attitude comes out most clearly in "Burning Daylight," of which the hero, an Alaskan superman of the typical London sort, returns from the Klondike with a fortune, by primitive methods puts the anemic, unmuscular financiers in their place, becomes himself a robber baron at the expense of his soul, and finally throws away his money and flees from the world to make a bare livelihood on an out-of-the-way farm. Yet, with all its criticism and rejection of business, this novel makes pretty plain the underground connection between its author's individualism and that of the Gilded Age —a connection made plain also in "Martin Eden," and even plainer in "The Iron Heel," in which the leading industrialist is a Wolf Larsen of business and is recognized, though as an enemy, as at least a worthy and in a sense a kindred enemy.

Still other aspects of his special time and place made their contribution to Jack London's peculiar and paradoxical literary blend. One of the most important was the frontier, which was not far away from California in the 1870's, and with which both his mother and his foster father had affiliations. An obvious sign of his heritage is his fondness for frontiers—Alaska, the South Seas—and frontier conditions and types, for men who have escaped the fetters of civilization, for outcasts and outlaws. Another is his agrarian streak, his preaching of a flight to the land. His attitude towards business men

(*Continued on page* 16)

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You Can't Beat the Dutch

OLD HAVEN. By David Cornel DeJong. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

SLOW-MOVING, rich in texture, built as solidly as the Dutch town wherein most of the action takes place, "Old Haven" is an extraordinary novel which makes most current fiction in comparison thin and pale. Though not a first novel, as its publication in the Houghton Mifflin Fellowship series might indicate, it is without any qualification the ablest prize novel published this year. And if I seem to burble with enthusiasm, most readers having what the eighteenth century called taste and discernment will, I am convinced, grow equally lyrical over its merits. It is not a book for those who demand swift and violent action, but it is a book almost every page of which is savory with human life.

The story concerns Tjerk Mellema, from the time his younger brother is born in a storm which threatens the existence of his native Dutch village, to the day he and his wife, whom the town will not accept, migrate to America. This, however, is but a glimpse into its contents. Framing the biography of Tjerk is the biography of his younger brother Klaas, born with a caul and dying in order to enjoy the dramatic funeral with which the novel concludes. The peculiarities of Klaas's birth lead the wiseacres to consider him "a very strange child, which will be touched by God and burdened down by the devil, and be of astonishment to men." And there is a third brother, Maarten, who is in his way an equally fresh and interesting invention.

But even the lives of three brothers do not exhaust the contents of this remarkable book. The entire Mellema clan down to the remotest relation rise up before us with sympathy and dramatic force. They range from Great Beppe, who defies the village by playing the accordion and opening a saloon, to Jantje, pious, smug, orthodox, and insufferable; from the good man Gosse, one of the few endurable good men in fiction, to Pake Hannia, the dour embodiment of all that is unlovely in Calvinism. Beyond these in inexhaustible profusion are the population of Witsum itself, its characters, its animals, its life, its customs, its curious and absorbing psychology, and beyond that in turn other personages from other nooks and corners of Holland. I have read no novel this year, and few in recent years, which thus evoked and dramatized a whole culture.

For here is provincial Dutch life, better done than it has ever been in English before, pictured with a sympathy, with a latent humor, with a catholicity of interest which recall the great days of the Russian novel. I do not know whether more to admire the dialogue or the descriptions. The characters talk in native idiom, but this idiom is never merely picturesque, it always does what it is supposed to do, and yet it leaves a taste on the tongue. And the descriptions, whether they concern landscape or people, are, despite the length of the book, both economical and poetic: economical in the swiftness with which they sketch their subjects, poetic in that they set Holland in an atmosphere at once dreamlike and true.

The only valid complaint against "Old Haven" for the mature reader, at least, is that there may be too much of it. Possibly the book might have been shortened by judicious omission. Certainly it will be important to watch what Mr. De Jong does next. His maturity, thus suddenly revealed, is admirable. Though he varies the point of view, his control of the material is complete: never do we lose sight of Tjerk, with whom we discover the ways of life, and particularly the ways of Dutch life.

Excellent as are most of the male characters, the women are in some respects even better. Great Beppe is a fictional triumph, the four unmarried sisters, filling up their rigidly futile lives with millinery and propriety, excellent. They recall George Eliot or "Cranford." The introduction of Antoinette, the modern Dutch girl from the south of Holland, into the conservatism of Witsum, delicious to the reader, insufferable to Antoinette. is a stroke of genius. In sum, during the years I have been reviewing fiction, "Old Haven" is almost the only new book concerning which I can honestly say that it seems to me touched with genius, and I hope it portends for Mr. DeJong a rich and full career.

Sinister House

REBECCA. By Daphne du Maurier. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

SO Cinderella married the prince, and then her story began. Cinderella was hardly more than a school-girl, and the overworked companion of a snobbish woman of wealth; the prince was Maximilian de Winter, whom she had heard of as the owner of Manderley in Cornwall, one of the most magnificent show places in England, who had come to the Riviera to forget the tragic death of his wife Rebecca. He was twice the little companion's age, but she conceived a starved girl's adoration for him when he was kind to her, and there was something about her freshness that seemed to please him. Then to her astonished rapture, he proposed marriage to her, and carried her off to the splendors of Manderley, in its forest of azaleas, sloping down to the sea that had drowned Rebecca, the first Mrs. de Winter—"Mrs. de Winter," simply, as every one still calls her. For slowly and subtly the girl's dream changes to a nightmare. The great house where she cannot find her way, the first wife's shuttered bedroom, the servants who say that in Mrs. de Winter's time there were no complaints, and above all the old housekeeper, who keeps for the first Mrs. de Winter the ghoulish devotion of Phaedra's nurse or Electra's old slave—they all close in on her, like the monstrous azaleas. There was some mystery about Rebecca's death, too, as the village idiot knows; but the book is skillfully contrived so that it does not depend only on knowledge of it for its thrill; it can afford to give no hint of it till two-thirds of the way through. But the revelation, when it comes, leads to one of the most prolonged, deadly, and breathless fencing-matches that one can find in fiction, a battle of wits that would by itself make the fortune of a melodrama on the stage.

Daphne du Maurier

For this is a melodrama, unashamed, glorying in its own quality, such as we have hardly had since that other dependant, Jane Eyre, found that her house too had a first wife. It has the weaknesses of melodrama; in particular, the heroine is at times quite unbelievably stupid, as when she takes the advice of the housekeeper whom she knows to hate her. But if the second Mrs. de Winter had consulted with any one before trusting the housekeeper, we should miss one of the best scenes in the book. There is also, as is almost inseparable from a melodrama, a forced heightening of the emotional values; the tragedy announced in the opening chapter is out of proportion to the final outcome of the long battle of wits that ends the book. But it is as absorbing a tale as the season is likely to bring.

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Frontiersman of the Mind

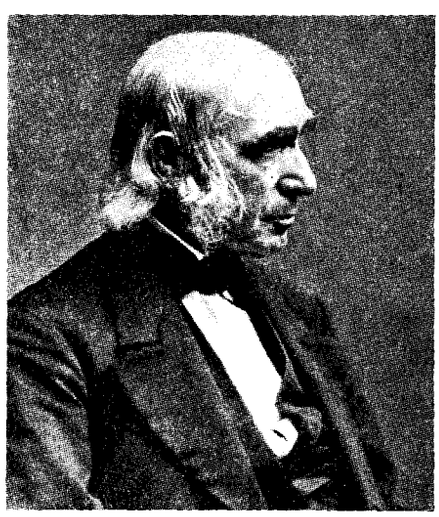
THE JOURNALS OF BRONSON ALCOTT. Edited by Odell Shepard. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1938. $5.

Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

THE timing of Professor Shepard's work has been excellent. Last year he published his biography of Alcott, "Pedlar's Progress," in which that much maligned and often laughed at seer was given his just place in American intellectual history. The philosopher, and particularly the talkative philosopher, is always liable to ridicule; the idealist, and particularly the optimistic idealist, can always be proved wrong; the penniless and improvident saint has never been highly esteemed in America. Professor Shepard in his biography must have convinced the most skeptical that Alcott's medium was talk, which loses none of its importance because it leaves few tangible records behind it. He demonstrated Alcott's leadership, which if fanatical was sincere, in that idealism which is just as much a part of the American temperament and American history as commercialism or Babbittry. He put Alcott's financial shiftlessness in true perspective, showing that his neglect for tomorrow's bills was chargeable to his concentration upon tomorrow's thinking. If he loved security too little, it was because he loved his fellow man more, and if his family suffered, they suffered with him, and with consent if not enthusiasm. That famous anecdote, told by Louisa, of his return from his first lecturing tour in the West, with only a dollar bill in his pocket, but the way opened for another venture, and Mrs. Alcott's courageous reply, "I call that doing *very well*," is capped in these journals by the account of a later tour when he did make eight hundred dollars. Alcott had a way, whether in education, or in his estimates of his friends, or of his own endeavors, of being proved right. But, as Thoreau said of him, "he had no venture in the present. His job was to prompt God and disgrace the low thinking of his contemporaries."

Such a re-creation of the man was essential before this selection of five hundred odd pages from the five million words of his Journal should be given to the public. For Alcott's writing, with rare exceptions, is not literature, nor is it often coherent philosophy, nor light enough to be read as a picture of Concord and Boston society. Only when he estimates a man, such as Emerson, or Lowell, or Thoreau, does he write like a man-of-letters. His mind had too little discipline for writing, and indeed he was not enough interested in writing as such. His genius was for flow—the flow of talk which carries ideas on its surface and washes over and around the hearers' minds until something sticks.

But if this Journal is not a monument of good writing, it has much also to commend it, even to the most unphilosophic reader. Here are the actors in New England's golden age intimately described. Here is the inner story of what must be regarded as one of the most pathetic attempts of disinterested spirits to begin a new life—the colony at Fruitlands. Here are the records of that pungent exploring of the possibilities of humanity in a New World, which was the subject of endless conversations at Emerson's house, and Thoreau's cabin, or his attic chamber. Here is that curious compound of American aggressiveness and age-old idealism, called by the irreverent Transcendentalism, better exemplified than in all the books about it. And here, most of all, is the life story and life study of a character who grows more and more interesting, psychologically, spiritually, historically, as you read these records which are so many of them his earnest attempts to record the progress—if any—of his life. The scholar who wishes to trace the impact of new science, new philosophy, new economics upon the American mind of half a century, or to understand the impulses behind the reforming, idealistic, religious America, which is so over-simplified by calling it Puritan, must know this book.



Bronson Alcott, about 1875. "His neglect of tomorrow's bills was chargeable to his concentration upon tomorrow's thinking." . . .

But it is not a book for scholars only. Alcott's self-story will impress all who read it. They will find abundant reasons for his failure to be another Socrates. When Carlyle, impatient of interruption, and gloomy with his undigested "Oliver Cromwell," attacked all social reforms, Alcott could answer "The living breathe with the living, nor go prowling about the sepulchres by the sweet light of day—intent on the charities and humanities for dispelling the darkness and driving afar the spectres"—which left the sage of Chelsea in a fog. When at Heraud's a new magazine was proposed, he wished to name it *The Janus, an Ephemeris of the Permanent in Religion, Philosophy, Science, Art, and Letters*—which would sink the *Queen Mary*. Yet this is the man whose appreciation of Thoreau's greatness was the first and most discriminating, whose courage in the slavery riots was so instructive that he did not think of it as courage, who by no poverty, contempt, hardship, or misunderstanding, even by his family and his friends, could be persuaded to deviate an inch from his faith that, to quote Professor Shepard, " 'conquest of nature' is only the beginning of man's task, that the real frontier lies within us, and that the true America is a country of the mind."

Dark Emotions

THE FATHERS. By Allen Tate. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

THIS is a novel of the South in the years immediately preceding the Civil War and during the opening weeks of the conflict. It is the story of the Buchans of Virginia and of the Poseys who stemmed from Maryland, a tale of dark emotions working deeply beneath a rigid code of conduct and flaring into actions that would seem melodramatic were their reporter less devoted than he is to the practice of under-writing and less wary of explicit statement. It is a novel that contains a number of characters who have become more or less familiar to us by their frequent appearances in Southern fiction:—Major Buchan, old-school gentleman of "honor and dignity," who lived by rules and who was helpless when the rules were broken; Sarah Buchan, who was so convinced of the immemorial rightness of the least domestic ritual that the mere questioning of it would have made her feel that "the purity of womanhood was in danger, that religion and morality were jeopardized, and that infidels had wickedly asserted that the State of Virginia (by which she meant her friends and kin) was not the direct legatee of the civilization of Greece and Rome"; old Uncle Coriolanus, faithful house and body servant; the two "peculiar old ladies" ("Aunt Jane Anne drank coffee all night, and nobody had ever seen Miss Millie eat anything but overripe bananas"); the no less peculiar Uncle Jarman, recluse and unpublished scholar, with his books, manuscripts, and five large slopjars; John Langton, handsome, dissipated bachelor sportsman, bold and insolent; Yellow Jim, illegitimate half-brother of imperious George Posey; and, finally, pretty little Jane Posey, with the mind of a child and the body of a woman, "a girl who could never have been

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in love and would have thrown herself about, a perpetual apple of discord. . . ."

These normal and eccentric Southern types all exhibit certain stock characteristics, but the drama into which they are precipitated by the key characters of George Posey and Susan Buchan (George, who remains the promise rather than the realization of a character; Susan, who achieves something of the intensity but none of the clarity of a Greek tragic figure) is far from commonplace. Mr. Tate is a poet turned novelist, and he views life with the eyes of a poet who is not content with ready-made patterns and interpretations. I think, however, that the pattern of life which he has drawn in "The Fathers," and the interpretation he has put upon it, will puzzle many readers.

They will be puzzled and disappointed, as discerning critics of Mr. Tate's poetry have been in the past, by the author's indirection and inconclusiveness. Louis Untermeyer tells us in "Modern American Poetry" that "Tate himself has said his method consists in playing the role of a hawk, 'gradually circling round the subject, threatening it, filling it with suspense, and finally accomplishing its demise without ever quite using the ultimate violence upon it.'" And Mr. Untermeyer continues with the comment that this poet "cannot flourish a finality or bring an emotion simply to the surface. In his circumlocutory, or circumambient, manner he is likely to leave the climax unsolved; the reader is not always certain that, in Tate's hawk-like swoop, the final capture is accomplished. . . ."

This critical comment is as justly applicable to Mr. Tate's first novel as it is to his verse, for the poetic technique has been carried over into prose. The subject is circled, but we are left in doubt that the capture has been effected; our interest is excited, page after page, but not finally satisfied. We are asked to believe that characters are "grinding sharp, obscure axes of passion" beneath the surface of behavior, but these "axes" are so hidden from the light that we have no reason to be convinced of their reality. In addition to all this, "The Fathers," although written from a single point of view, suffers from a dispersion of interest. George Posey commands our attention as a potentially fascinating character, only to disappear during crucial stages of the action. Susan Buchan begins as a young and simple Southern wife and ends as a woman of mystery whose motives are not quite comprehensible. Lacy Buchan, the narrator who looks back over fifty years to tell the story, is seen only as a youth whose personality is negligible.

One must respect the sincerity of Mr. Tate's effort and the quality of his writing, but the essential task of a novelist, who seeks to communicate emotion and thought and experience, is the creation of knowable human beings acting in understandable relationships. In my opinion, Mr. Tate has not performed it successfully.

Hounds, Please, Gentlemen

PATCHES OF SUNLIGHT. By Lord Dunsany. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by ERNEST BOYD

LORD DUNSANY'S autobiography will be a surprise to those who know only his books and will appeal as a highly characteristic document to those who know the author. These are the memoirs of a fox-hunting man, a huntin', shootin', and fishin' fellow with literary talent and a sensitive imagination. Here are records of riding to hounds, of big game shooting, of potting rabbits, of shooting partridges and pheasants, of cricket matches, of war in South Africa against Kruger, of war in Europe against Germany, of war in Dublin between Sinn

"The juxtaposition of two people in one, a man of imagination and a fashionable sportsman, make up the personality of Lord Dunsany."

Feiners and West Britons—to use the derisive Irish term for pro-British Protestants.

The author of "Time and the Gods," "The Sword of Welleran," "The Magic Mountain," "The Gods of Pegana," and so forth is less in evidence than Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, eighteenth Baron Dunsany. He is more illuminating when he describes his human experiences than when he tries to talk about his writings. His best stories (autobiographically speaking) have nothing to do with his position as a literary figure in that galaxy known as the Irish Literary Renaissance. For example, he relates how an officer at the head of a squadron of cavalry near Salonika came upon some generals and their staffs sitting on shooting-sticks studying maps and blocking the narrow road. "How could a regimental officer move generals out of his way? No precedent existed to help him. So he said words that, so far as I know, have never been disobeyed in England yet: 'Hounds, please, Gentlemen.' And they all made way for him, and he rode on with his men."

He might, of course, on the same principle have included the story about his own butler at Dunsany Castle. After the 1916 Sinn Fein Rising in Dublin, in which Dunsany was wounded, only the British army was supposed to bear arms. When Dunsany emerged from hospital and returned home, as was his wont, he picked up a rifle and went out to kill something. The shots echoed over the length and breadth of the County Meath and the military authorities were aroused. They raided Dunsany Castle, searched the house, discovered no signs of treason, and departed. As the men left Dunsany's imperturbable butler said to the officer in charge: "Who shall I say called, sir?" He does, however, tell the pleasant tale of Lady Middleton's footman, who went to Buckingham Palace to receive the Military Cross. Having a permit to bring one other person and having no relatives, the man asked Lady Middleton if she would care to come, and she said she would be delighted. At one of the doors an official took the card and asked: "What relation is this lady to you?" "Oh, good gracious. She is no relation," said the ex-footman. "Then, what exactly is the connection?" asked the official. "She is my mistress," was the answer. "Oh, we can't have that sort of thing *here*," said the horrified official.

Dunsany is still curiously self-conscious of the contrast between his inner life as a dreamer of fantastic tales and his social and sporting life, and he seems to have had the idea that his books were not taken seriously because of his title. His references to AE, Yeats, Padraic Colum, are very casual, although these were precisely the people who at once recognized his abilities and appreciated him apart from his deer-stalking, cricket, and fox-hunting. In this latter world, "the garden-party people," as he calls them, almost nobody was interested either in him or any other author. Occasionally his resentment of this fact comes out.

Some of the finest pages in the book are those describing the author's childhood, a record of a sensitive, imaginative boy's world, afterwards to be transferred to the printed page by a man who never seems to have been at home in the kind of society to which he naturally—if not socially—belonged. The juxtaposition of two people in one, a man of imagination and a fashionable sportsman, make up the personality of Lord Dunsany. Both aspects of his character emerge in this book and form a picture which is true to life and not ruffled by arrogant modesty. What Ireland needs is more cricketers like Lord Dunsany.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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Thomas Wolfe

SOME time between dark and dawn in Brooklyn or London or Berlin Thomas Wolfe once scrawled in his word-loaded ledgers a paragraph which appeared in his "Of Time and the River." It was a paragraph which went back like so much of his writing to his undiminishing memory of things personal and things past, a memory of his father's dying in Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore. The roaring old man was dying without a roar, bleeding and pitiful and fragile. And Tom Wolfe who had watched with his magnificent watching memory wrote:

> The great engine of the hospital, with all its secret, sinister and inhuman perfections, together with its clean and sterile smells which seemed to blot out the smell of rotting death around one, became a hateful presage of a man's destined end. Suddenly, one got an image of his own death in such a place as this—of all that death had come to be—and the image of that death was somehow shameful. It was an image of a death without man's ancient pains and old, gaunt aging—an image of death drugged and stupefied out of its ancient terror and stern dignities—of a shameful death that went out softly, dully in anesthetized oblivion, with the fading smell of chemicals on man's final breath. And the image of death was hateful.

In that same hospital in the early morning of Thursday, September 15, 1938, Wolfe died and his dying so young, so far from the normal end of his great powers, makes that image of death which he saw about his dying father more hateful still. Nobody is too young to die, no gifts are so great that they hold death off. And in writing thirty-seven is not age of infancy: if Dostoievsky, despite all his ills, lived to be sixty and Tolstoy died at eighty-two, Byron, who died at thirty-six long outlived both Keats and Shelley. The sense of young dying in Tom Wolfe's case comes less from his age than from the sense that he was unfinished, perhaps not yet developed fully, though full still of a seeing, hungry remembering of life and the eager energy to set it down. But, as Tom Wolfe, living and writing, was almost a figure for the personification of Life, so in his dying he moved out of life not in the sentimentalized terms of a minor poet who died young but as almost a legendary figure in man's ancient and unequal conflict with the grisly adversary.

Tom Wolfe will be a legend. Indeed, while he lived in his great body and in his huge all-touching existence as well as in his big books, he seemed sometimes less a man making fiction than a giant marching in his own legend which was also the legend of his people. And that story of the Gants and the Pentlands at its worst and best grew from this American earth and the people who live upon it. North Carolina, where both Wolfe and his legend began, did not readily appreciate that. Indeed, in some quarters the relationship was resisted. In his lifetime his books were banned from the library of his native town of Asheville which in time's own irony came proudly to claim him after he was dead. That is an old custom.

But it is not the only old custom. There is the custom of mourning the loss of something that never existed. Something of the homefolks' first resistance to the book about the home town may lie behind the criticism of Wolfe's books as undisciplined and formless. I suspect in some such criticism a wish, like Asheville's, to have the native story a little nicer, a trifle neater, more ordered and patterned in delicacy and decorum. And now at his death I expect that the suggestion will be strenuously stirred that had he lived Tom Wolfe's big, sprawling, powerful, pouring prose would have been served in neater packages of sweeter stuff. It is possible to say anything about the dead. In Wolfe's case, they may even make him a classicist who might have been. But our loss will remain the unbounded vitality, the uncaptured power which made his books and his words and all his Gants and Pentlands alive. Form and discipline undoubtedly in important respects he lacked; it is lacking also in the confusion which is as much a part of American life as Tom Wolfe was.

In the truest sense he was the American wanderer—footloose, headloose, heartloose—even if his frontiers were Harvard and Brooklyn. He moved under the stars and the sun and, somehow moving, he was the Paul Bunyan of the heart and mind. He left his native North Carolina early; the years of his writing were spent outside of it. But never was a State carried so far and so completely as in the writing memory of this son. As he knew it he set it down in love, in contempt, in beauty and in ugliness. In no other writing has an American State been so passionately, so sensitively, so sharply drawn. Ultimately it was a portrayal full of love shaped far off in a strange nostalgia for place and people which was nowhere blinded by sentiment or blurred by the softening quality of distance. He drew his land as it was and wise men in it rejoiced for the drawing.

Men in his homeland honored him for his work. The last anger disappeared. When he went back last year hostility turned into hospitality, and for Wolfe, who had little self-protective power, the hospitality was sometimes more destructive than the hostility could have been. There was suggestion that he planned to come back to the North Carolina mountains to live and work. The sense that he belonged to North Carolina seemed to be growing both in Wolfe and in the State. Well, that is finished now: there will be no homecoming nor welcome now. Only a body went home, home to the hills of the Pentlands, home to the Altamont of the Gants. But it went properly home to his earth. Restless and wandering as Tom Wolfe was in his living, the chance is that he would have been restless and unhappy dead in any earth but his own.

His people have received the man as he was—and that was not easy for he was a strange one among them. The book folk will have an easier task. They may accept him and miss him for what he was—as formless, as undisciplined as the American story and as hungry and boisterous as the American in it. Or they may weep for a Tom Wolfe who might have emerged some time as something different, disciplined and precise. Wolfe's work, full of fault maybe but full of riches, too, is Wolfe. The man who might have been is an irrelevant phantom. We have loss enough to mourn.

JONATHAN DANIELS.

Once More, Ye Laurels . . .

(For Thomas Wolfe. 1900-1938)

BY SARA HENDERSON HAY

FOR the unrecorded, for the unsaid.
The passionate unutterance of the early dead,
The breaker halted midway to the beach,
The foaming turbulence of the mind's speech
Struck and becalmed.

For the great fury pounding in the breast,
Choked in its forward surge, caught at the crest,
Baffled, undone in darkness; for the wind
That blew above the mountains of the mind
Dammed in an alley . . .

For the unsaid, for the unwritten. Oh weep
For the too early dead, sunken in sleep
Too soon, against their wills, and come to nought,
And all the brave bright violence of thought
Unspent, unspoken.

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Letters to the Editor: *Orthodox Opinions of "Joseph in Egypt"*

Bildungsroman

SIR:—Miss Edith Hamilton's article on "Joseph in Egypt" demands rebuttal if only because of the eminence of Thomas Mann. Miss Hamilton leads off with the statement that Kristin Lavransdatter, Anthony Adverse, and Scarlet O'Hara are real to us and bridge the distance between us and their times. I submit that the same is done by Joseph. It is true that physically—because of his perfect beauty—Joseph is not realistic any more than, say, Rudolph Valentino used to be. But is it the physical exterior of Kristin Lavransdatter, Anthony Adverse, and Scarlett O'Hara which makes them real to us? By no means; it is their eternal traits of character. And the same holds true in a marked degree of Thomas Mann's Joseph. We partake of his story with him because he is remarkably modern and *not* archeological. His surroundings, human and otherwise, are, as Miss Hamilton charges, archeological, but Joseph is not. Joseph is distinctly a stranger looking at all this with other eyes, eyes which due to his consciousness of his myth significance, can criticize what he sees in terms of future centuries. Joseph's characteristics are modern. He is shrewd, diplomatic, opportunistic. He has a flair for words and knows how to use them to play upon the susceptibilities of others. He exploits his charm in precisely the way done by enterprising young men who come to New York to make their fortune.

But were the author to make the other characters who belong in this pre-Christian period equally modern, equally approachable, the whole significance of Joseph's journey among them would be lost. If they are to be real, they must be real only in a parable manner. Apparently the technical devices by which this manner is achieved annoyed Miss Hamilton as much as the manner itself. Apparently also she examined the book in the light of her own taste about novels rather than in the light of this illustrious author's intention.

If Miss Hamilton refuses to yield to the magic by which ancient Egypt has been evoked by the one genius using the novel form today, it can only be because in her action-minded way she quarrels with Thomas Mann's whole *Bildungsroman* concept of what the novel should be.

FITZROY K. DAVIS.

New York City.

Footnotes

SIR:—I am glad to see that others than pedants desiderate footnotes for such a work as "Joseph in Egypt." With no thought of deprecating Miss Hamilton's heterodox view, but rather to indicate one kind of source which Mann frequently uses, I volunteer a reference. The story of the Egyptian ladies who were so affected by Joseph's beauty that they cut themselves with fruit-knives and were oblivious of the blood that drenched their hands is an old midrash. The sources are cited conveniently in Louis Ginzberg, "The Legends of the Jews," V, 339 f. (Philadelphia, 1925). In II, 50 of this work (1910) Professor Ginzberg retells the climax of the story as follows: "When Joseph came in, the women could not take their eyes off him, and they all cut their hands with the knives, and the oranges in their hands were covered with blood, but they, not knowing what they were doing, continued to look upon the beauty of Joseph without turning their eyes away from him." This does not, of course, affect Miss Hamilton's strictures on this story or on the work as a whole.

MOSES HADAS.

Columbia University
New York City.

"No mystery stories, please—I always know the solutions right away!"

Why?

SIR:—May I enquire why Edith Hamilton says that "Thomas Mann is perhaps the most eminent novelist of today," when she finds that Joseph's magnificent—the adjective is mine—handling of Potiphar in the garden scene is "vaguely allegorical, semi-philosophical, pseudo-archeological discourse"? If the characters are strange because they act contrary to Edith Hamilton's ideas of logic, if Potiphar's wife tries to win Joseph by threats—and of course that was dumb of her—and if Joseph seemed dead to Jacob because Jacob thought of him as dead—and of course he was all wet about that—then why is "Thomas Mann perhaps the most eminent novelist of today"? Especially why, when he fails to have a footnote to give his source on each archeological detail?

RUTH MANN.

New York City.

Potiphar's Wife's Party

SIR:—From a nearly one hundred per cent disagreement with Miss Edith Hamilton's "heterodox view" of "Joseph in Egypt," I select one item: her comment on the party given by Potiphar's wife where the women cut themselves with knives on the appearance of the handsome steward, Joseph. She writes that the court ladies "are not like any court ladies we have ever known or read about." In her reading of the book, did Miss Hamilton chance to skip the paragraph on page 592 where the author lists sources for the story: the Koran, the seventeen Persian songs, the poem of Firdausi, and Dshami's late version? Out of curiosity I sought the Koran in our city library and there found the party—knives and all. Certainly Thomas Mann has presented the event with excellent humor, keener than that of the modern newspaper man when reporting feminine foolishness in the presence of Robert Taylor or some other popular hero. One reader of *S.R.L.* feels that Miss Hamilton has lost an opportunity both to laugh and to learn an ancient legend not given in our English Bible.

ANNABEL C. ROE.

State Teachers College
Worcester, Mass.

Critical Shot

SIR:—When in her "heterodox opinion" Edith Hamilton asked Thomas Mann for a scholarly edition of "Joseph in Egypt," with "a note for each detail," I rubbed my eyes; it seemed to me that one whom she described as "perhaps the most eminent novelist of today" might make better use of his time and talent than in writing footnotes. But when she ended by declaring that he has deliberately turned away "from any attempt to enter the timeless world of letters" and "has chosen to do no more than lead us into an archeological dream," I wondered whether even heterodoxy were worth such misunderstanding. This, surely, must be the wildest critical shot of the year; no other reputable critic can have so completely missed the point of any reputable work.

HERBERT J. MULLER.

Purdue University
Lafayette, Ind.

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Colonial Lost Lady

THE GENERAL'S LADY. By Esther Forbes. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

WHEN Dilly Lavendar queued up her red hair like a man's, put on ploughboy's smock and overalls, and started to tramp from Prides Falls, Vermont, to Providence, Rhode Island, in spite of there being a revolution on foot in the not-yet United States, she didn't realize just what she was getting into. And neither does the reader who embarks upon Miss Forbes's newest novel. For here is a book that begins with a dash and a flourish, reminiscent of the older school of historical novels—a pretty, young heroine, disguised as a man and marching along with the ragged Continentals—and then, just when we are ready for all sorts of picaresque adventures, gives itself a shake and turns into something entirely different. The pretty, young heroine isn't really the heroine, the dashing opening merely serves to get her an introduction to the leading character, and, instead of picaresque adventure we are to have a psychological study not of Dilly Lavendar but of Morganna Bale Milroy, the Tory beauty who married her rebel General to save her family's fortune, and hated him after that. And, once that study begins, it is worked out with skill and intensity. Miss Forbes gets to her destination—indeed she does. But there is a certain impishness about her method of getting there that made one reader wonder whether any of her ancestors were Corrigans.

For the book draws in instead of spreading out—concentrates upon the house at Fayrely and the fateful figure of its small, elegant mistress, seen first through the puzzled, admiring eyes of Dilly, her protégé, seen more clearly as the book progresses and Dilly comes to know more. Morganna Milroy was dainty, aristocratic, an egotist, and a devourer. Yet she had a spell. It worked upon Dilly, the country girl, it worked upon red-faced, able General Milroy. It haunted Alan Brann, the paroled young English officer she had nursed three years before till it drew him recklessly back to her. But it did not work upon her stepson, Claude, nor on Phillis, her Negro servant, nor on the repressed and venomous Catsey Millis who wanted to marry Claude. And out of the spell and its workings, came the pistol shot that ended the life of General Milroy and the murder trial that followed. It is hardly fair to Miss Forbes to give the denouement of the trial or the denouement of the book. Suffice it to say that it is an excellent and convincing trial—the trial of Morganna Milroy and Alan Brann for the murder of Morganna's husband—and that it does not turn out exactly as you expected it would. You did not expect a murder trial at all? Well, that is Miss Forbes again, or the Corrigan side of her.

In the figure of Morganna Milroy, with her ruthlessness, her charm, and her curious passion, Miss Forbes has drawn a very convincing witch-woman, with certain resemblances to the late Mrs. Mannon and certain ones to another lost lady, but with a very decided flavor of her own. The book revolves about her and she is the book, but the minor characters are clear and distinct, from Hans Pfalz, the clockwork soldier to Mr. Merrifield, the minister. Alan Brann is human, for all his woodland qualities, and Claude Milroy is human and likable, in spite of being the avenger of blood. And the historical background, as is usual with Miss Forbes, is done with great skill and ease. The people are always people, not wax

Eric Schaal

Esther Forbes "gets to her destination . . . But there is a certain impishness about her method of getting there" . . .

figures carefully set among period furniture, in the genuine costume of the time. Nor does Miss Forbes make the mistake of transferring twentieth-century customs and prejudices to the eighteenth. And may I add that she has a style—and a style that makes her work a genuine pleasure to read? Perhaps that shouldn't be necessary to add. But there are a good many novelists one reads with more duty than pleasure.

"The General's Lady" is neither as broad a canvas nor as copious a book as "Paradise" and those who look for another "Paradise" in it will be disappointed. It stands by its central character rather than by its historical setting, and its mixture of psychological study and dramatic event is Miss Forbes's own recipe. As an unrepentant reader, I must confess that I would have liked Dilly Lavendar to have a book of her own—the book that begins with the first score of pages and then changes. But that was not Miss Forbes's intention. This is Morganna's book—the tragedy of a New England Clytemnestra, vividly and surely told.

Edith Wharton's Unfinished Novel

THE BUCCANEERS. A Novel by Edith Wharton. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

THE critics, mostly a low-class lot, used to lay stress on the steep social reredos that lay behind "Mrs. Edith Wharton." (Her name, as Pearsall Smith has lately reminded us, was Mrs. Edward Wharton; the other was a solecism she rightly abhorred, even when uttered by the London *Times*). But Mrs. Wharton herself was not able to take Society very seriously, either here or in London; she took care to live her most intelligent years in France, enjoying such quaint or humorous outcasts as Henry James and Pearsall Smith. And in this last (unfinished) novel she was amusing herself by one final spoof in which she made impartial hay both of English and American fashionable fetiches.

Mr. Gaillard Lapsley, her literary executor, makes eloquent but surely unnecessary apology for the publication of this incomplete novel. It is surely among her most interesting and shrewdest studies. Parts of it are obviously still in plan, and it breaks off just at the point where she is tightening the threads for important and rebellious emotions. Briefly the theme is the importation into England of a group of American Beauties who have been socially unsuccessful at home. An interesting contrast, if anyone cared to meditate it, is the wholly different treatment of a not dissimilar situation in Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca." There also we have a young female outsider marrying into a great English house; the younger treatment of the theme is to melodramatize and romanticize; Mrs. Wharton keeps to the mood of crisp and tart sardonics. So, excepting one scene which Mr. Lapsley admires but which I find impossibly Boucicault in tone, she manages some credibility for an otherwise fantastic plot.

But this is a novel in which the defects are precisely as fascinating (to the sophister) as the merits. All of it, even in passages Mrs. Wharton would undoubtedly have given some revision, is done in the agreeable suavity of the fin de siècle. But be not deceived; the great old lady knew precisely and well what she was doing; her plot structure was as formal and as obvious as the seating of a dinner-party, but she had a merciless eye for character. She could portray the *hig lif* because she had lived it. How pleasing it is that our subtlest observers of British social comedy were (not Henry James, who was terrorized by Society) the Americans Smith and Jones. For don't forget that Mrs. Wharton was née Jones. She remains worth keeping up with.

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From the jacket design of "The Long Valley"

The Steinbeck Country

THE LONG VALLEY. By John Steinbeck. New York: The Viking Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

STEINBECK is one of the few American writers who refuse to be back-seat-driven by success; he writes what he wants to write, instead of letting the expectations of his public push him into a groove. Yet in this collection of fifteen short stories there is less variety than you would expect, after his last three novels; which may be just as well. The one distinctly off-the-trail story of the lot is a burlesque hagiography, which might better have been left in private circulation. The others all deal with what will soon be known as the Steinbeck country, the regions around Monterey and Salinas; which seems to be populated by suppressed husbands, frustrated wives, brides who cheat unless you horsewhip them, old men who are no good any more, sex-starved spinsters of good family who fool around with Chinamen and then hang themselves, etc. About the only people in the book who are pointed in any direction are a couple of communists who go looking for martyrdom under orders; and even them Steinbeck regards with a faintly ironic eye.

However, if that is what he sees that is what he has to write about; and here is certainly some of the best writing of the past decade. Outside of one or two stories you won't find an ounce of fat in his style; and you could pick forty paragraphs out of this volume that would be fit to appear as models in any textbook of composition. Steinbeck makes his country live and the people live as part of it, as much a part as the horned toads or the buzzards. It is not so much the malice of man that gets them down as Nature, internal and external; the pity you feel for them is the pity you would feel for an animal trapped and doomed. But Steinbeck is not too proud to pity them himself; and if his vision is perhaps limited in scope there are no blind spots in the areas where it operates. He sees clear down through these people, and reproduces them in as many dimensions as they have.

Preferences among the fifteen stories will differ, of course; but perhaps most readers would agree that the best are the three episodes in a boy's life which have already been published, in a limited edition, as "The Red Pony." The same boy and his grandfather, a worn-out pioneer to whose repetitious reminiscences people no longer want to listen, appears in "The Leader of the People." How much autobiography there may or may not be in all this does not matter; those stories are packed with truth, that would have been just as true in the Stone Age. Notable among the others are "The Raid"—how it feels to be beaten up by vigilantes, and to have to wait for it; "The Vigilante"—after-effects of a lynching on a member of the mob; and "Johnny Bear," in which a half-wit with a trick of reproducing overheard conversations catalyzes both the good and evil emotion of a whole community. A collection of short stories does not always add much to the stature of a successful novelist; but "The Long Valley" leaves Steinbeck still the best prospect in American letters.

Footnote: It may be impertinent to call him a prospect, of course; but of all his books "In Dubious Battle" is the only one that dealt with material which, to this perhaps narrow reviewer, was intrinsically worth reading about. Hemingway was, indeed is, almost as good a technician; he may yet have an upturn like the stock market, but after his late slump one hesitates to make too bold predictions about any American writer.

American Don Quixote

AMERICAN QUEST. By Bradford Smith. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by LOUIS ADAMIC

IMPELLED by a need for greater understanding, Walter Quest, American Don Quixote, sets out to see his country and to peddle on the highways and byways a modern composite of the ideas of Plato, Buddha, and Christ, with a little of Walt Whitman and Emerson thrown in. "If I could get people to thinking it was smart to be strong and good and gentle," he says, "they might spread it around a little and when they found it paying dividends it might begin to take." So wandering all over America, and living according to his notion, Walt is a persuasive example; and returning finally to the little town in Connecticut where he started his journey, he speaks with a greater affirmation.

Bradford Smith

To a skeptic inquirer he says of his year of wandering:

> It gave me a feeling that in a land like this we've got something worth fighting for. It made me feel that in a land as full of differences in race and creed and geography and thought as this there must be a future. And it showed me that in spite of all the misery and hunger and brutality we need to be ashamed of, the dream that started it all isn't dead. It's still the great reality of our land and our people.

I imagine that Bradford Smith, too, knows the heartache of having seen, planned, and not quite realized. He set himself an ambitious task and, to my mind, he has come close to achieving his intent. He has done a vast sweeping canvas of America, warm and moving as a whole, strong and beautiful often in detail, executed with keen seeing and, for the most part, sensitive feeling and considerable versatility. The book has in it not only narrative prose, but poetry, dialogues, movie synopses, monologues, and soliloquies, as much variety almost as its subject matter. In quality, however, it sometimes falls short, being too glib and facile, its context too melodramatic, a bit synthetic. But now and then, especially when Mr. Smith writes of the American dream and his faith in it, his prose is equal to his theme.

His chief failure to score the perfect mark, seems to me to lie in the fact that Walt, although anything but dogmatic—in fact, strongly opposed to all isms and formulas and cure-alls—, approaches the scene and problem of America with too many ideas thought through before his great ramble. This makes his suggestions for ways-out sound over-simplified, especially in his story of the factory workers and owner in the city of Kingstown, Pennsylvania. But the book is, nonetheless, a fine, sweeping picture of Mr. Smith's America. It should get a wide circulation.

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Channel Fever

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

"In the afternoon he set down his morning thoughts."
—*Aubrey, on Hobbes*

Channel Fever

SEAMEN once had a fine phrase, Channel Fever.

After a long voyage, when the ship comes toward port (it was the English Channel they had in mind) she seems to mend her pace, like a horse toward the home stable. Of every craft it is true, clipper or cargo-wagon, ocean liner or oily tank. With gear trimmed tight and even the idlers at lookout (the cook peering through the garbage scuttle) she foots the paling water. Suddenly all are restless; passengers can settle to no pastime, not even in the bar. That uneasiness, that painful mix of past and future, that confusion of eagerness and regret, is what they call Channel Fever. It is a sense of destination—or destiny.

Garland for a Mad Lady

Rejoicing in your verse, I kept your name
Unmentioned lest some booster Get Behind It:
Too lovely is your stuff for vulgar fame—
Hell's bells, the readers worth it, let them find it.

Pellicular (thin-skinned) it is, and shy;
Impossible to those who feed on rubbish—
Too gay for solemn Patrons and canaille:
Thank God in poetry one can be snobbish.
Enigma in the woodpile! So, less caustic,
Reluctantly I name you in acrostic.

Campanology

Now it is autumn: crickets rock the night in even cadence with their sweet despairing antiphon. Now is the season of the diligent spider: and humanity buttons its shirt at the neck. I have my own private rituals. On a certain subway platform a loop of steel chain hangs on a metal post. Gently swung (while waiting for the train) it makes a clink just like the bell of the cricket.

Turn the tough metal of civilization to your own uses.

Burrs

Why does it take me so long to learn the simplest things? That burdock, for instance, simply means a dock (a weed) with burrs. This only occurred to me because they are thick on my trousers.

But then I thought, Ideas too, after they have ripened and flowered, develop their seeded burrs and stick to other people's minds.

Gresham's Law

Gresham's Law ("bad money drives out good") is nowhere more evident than in literature. Depreciated or debased currency takes the circulation; coinage of high metal value goes in hoarding.

What pressure is exerted—by people with the kindest intentions—to encourage second-rate and counterfeit work.

A Whimsical Essay

If you don't believe the above, let me give you an example. Long ago I wrote a little piece, pleasant enough but of no earthly importance. Somehow it got into an anthology and thence into school textbooks. Still, after twenty years, I find it reprinted in almost every new "educational" collection. The people who edit such things hand it on from one to another as an example of what they call The Whimsical Essay. (Horrible!) Later works written by the same hand, which perhaps have something of their own to say, it would never occur to these echo-mongers to examine. A silly little space-filler, written in a hurry to catch a newspaper deadline, becomes the mischievous spokesman for two decades of study.

Yet this also amuses me: it is perfectly in the tradition.

Morning Glories

I knew a man who said he wouldn't plant blue morning-glories around his cabin because they would be so beautiful they would interfere with his work. This was a gorgeous confusion of ideas; but so are most ideas.

Water Cure

For what ailed me, I tried the Water Cure.

I have a grand blue tumbler. I got it free, at a chain store, with a package of cereal. (And yet some people are dubious about Capitalism!)

My tumbler pleases me as much (almost as much) as the blue stained glass of Chartres Cathedral. I know what I'm talking about, because I have some fragments of Chartres glass, broken scraps given me years ago by the curator. When they put the windows together again after a War, there were pieces left over.

I go out to the faucet now and then and take a long swig of cold water. It is not quite as cold as a mountain spring I knew in Vermont, but it gives me suggestion and memory.

Fooling Myself

A good thing which makes you think of an even better thing is, in its moment, as good as the better thing. Or am I just fooling myself?

Even if I am, is not the prime agility of the artist the successful fooling of self? By fooling I mean outwitting, surprising, surpassing. If he keeps his mind on outwitting himself, he may also outwit some of the customers.

But O my God, he sometimes grunts to himself (being human) what magnificent things there are that they never notice.

Try therefore, damn fool, to outwit only yourself; to do better than you think you can; and so humbly attempting to surprise yourself you may attain to surprising others; though that is not the intention.

Where to Aim

Most firearms carry a little higher than they are aimed. But not the pen. With that, aim just above the target; and a little to the left.

Fullstanding Outgive

Because the Germans are much and anxiously in our minds, and because one is tempted to think doubtfully of them, I shall recall one of their fine phrases: *Vollstaendige Ausgabe*. By which they mean only what we call Complete Edition. But I like it in its literal: Fullstanding Outgive. These paragraphs are a Fullstanding Outgive.

Ring Off

The autumn fields are full of trilling, like telephones far away. Damn the crickets, calling me to tell me what I know already.

Spiral Shavings

These are spiral shavings under a carpenter's bench; fallen from the plane.

Or sandpapers, to smooth a few coarse privacies for the sake of the showcase.

Flowers in Hot Water

The hostess picks flowers to decorate the dining room. From her I learned that if you soak the stalks in a bucket of scalding water it somehow seals the stems and preserves the chlorophyll (or whatever is the plasm of a flower). They stay fresh much longer.

These are the wildings of the mind—dipped in hot water.

Afterthoughts

You came to visit My Country; and changed your mind about it. For you had known beforehand (one often does) what you thought you were going to see.

I showed you, in the few hours we had, some of my treasures. I showed you my First of *Leviathan*, and Blake's drawings, and the buffalo-tooth. I showed you the Dogwood Tree, and the lilacs from Walt Whitman's backhouse, and skipstones on the beach. I showed you copper pyrites from Peru, and a letter from Joseph Conrad, and the chunk of mortar Bill Hall dug out from the Great Wall of China.

But I thought afterward, why didn't I show him this, or that? There were so

(*Continued on page* 15)

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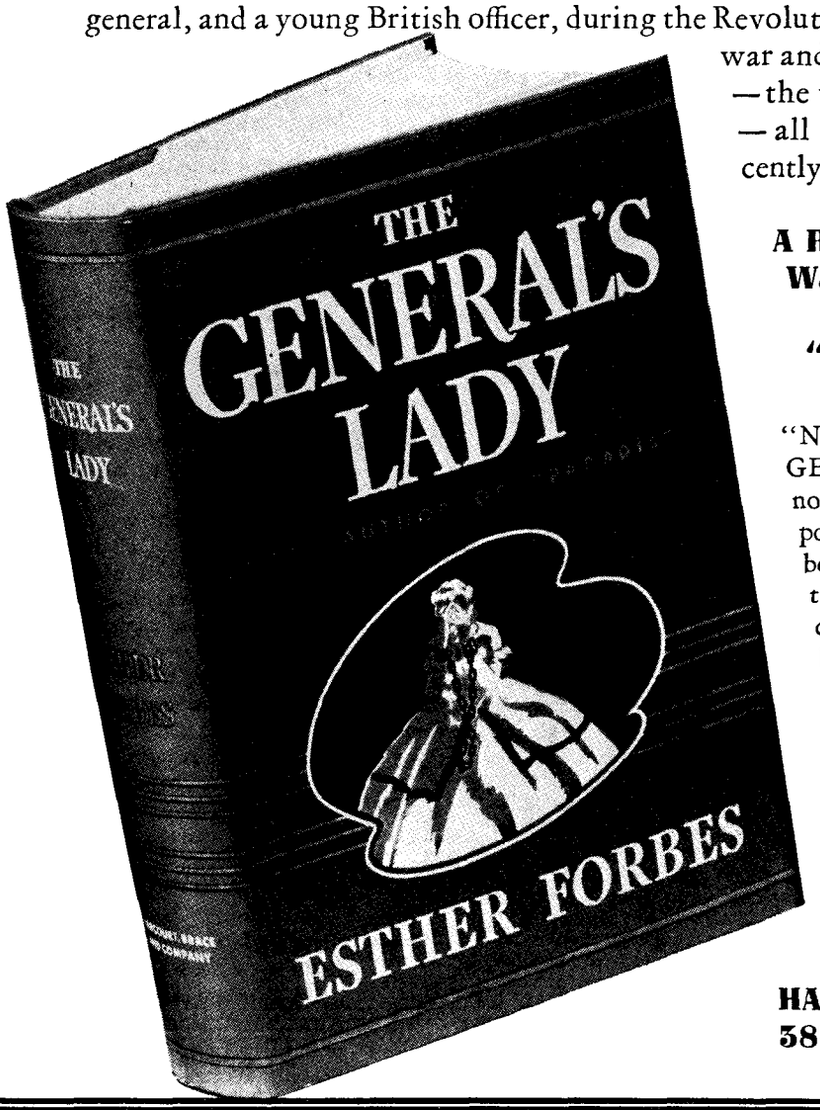

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The Democratic Creed

THE PROSPECTS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY. By George S. Counts. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock (a John Day book). 1938. $3.

Reviewed by HERBERT AGAR

EVERY man who is eager to see democracy restored and protected in America will be grateful for this book. It gives a true picture of what has gone wrong with our democratic institutions, and a true picture of the dignity (and the possible importance to mankind) of the democratic way of life. And it combats truly the assumption that democracy represents a "middle way." The struggle to make democracy succeed, Dr. Counts shows, is the only fight worth fighting; it is the reason for being alive today.

Democracy, writes Dr. Counts, "is an attitude of mind to which the exploitation of man by man is abhorrent; it is a way of life in which human personality is judged of supreme, of measureless, worth; it is an order of social relationships dedicated to the promotion of the individual and collective interests of common folk; it is, in a word, a society in which ordinary men and women may grow to their full stature." Democracy, if it be taken seriously, gives practical expression to the ethical imperative of Kant: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, as an end withal, never as a means only."

Seeing democracy in these terms, which are the true terms, Dr. Counts is never misled into confusing democracy with the mere political machinery of democracy. Democracy is not votes for everybody. Democracy is not Parliaments and Houses of Congress. Democracy is first of all an ethical absolute, and unless the political machinery—universal suffrage, and Parliaments, and the like—is used to support that absolute, the political machinery becomes a fraud.

Throughout his book Dr. Counts distinguishes between the economic, the social, and the political forms of democracy. It is only when these three forms are present at the same time that true democracy, the moral ideal which gives democracy its worth, can find expression. Knowing this, Dr. Counts has no patience with the doctrine that democracy is a compromise position, a mild middle way.

> In an age when great choices have to be made [he writes], when positive and determined social action has to be taken, democracy is denominated the middle way. Obviously if such a conception of democracy should prevail, its worst enemies could ask for nothing better. It would become a deceptive haven for the timid and the vacillating, while the bolder spirits would enroll under banners representing positive and challenging philosophies and programs. As a matter of fact, democracy is by no means a middle way between extremes, lacking substance of its own and defined in terms of its opponents. It is another way—unique, radical, revolutionary—the most adventurous way that man has ever taken—a way beset with difficulties and demanding the fullest possible development of the powers of the race.

No one who thinks that democracy is an easy creed, an excuse for letting the *status quo* alone while flattering ourselves with the great words used by our fathers—no one who thinks that the America of today is a true democracy—will enjoy this book. And no one who thinks these things can be a democrat.

Although he knows that the democratic creed is radical and revolutionary, although he scorns the doctrine that would make democracy "a deceptive haven for the timid and vacillating," Dr. Counts is no advocate of violence. On the contrary, he knows that the appeal to force marks the death of democracy.

> It is the uncompromising position of the present volume [he writes] that the method of peaceful change must be neither scorned nor abandoned, that it offers the only reasonable hope for a tolerable future. Instead of flirting with the machine gun and extolling the virtues of bloodshed, those who really believe in advancing the cause of popular liberty should be devoting their energies to the marshalling of the available cultural resources and the formation of a program designed to make the institutions and procedures of political democracy function effectively in the popular conquest of economic power.

It is to this great task that the present book is devoted.

If the task is to be done we must know the full implications of democracy; we must know why, as America has grown richer and older, our democracy has grown more weak; we must understand the new industrial civilization in terms of which our future destiny will be worked out; we must learn why it is that in many parts of the world men, having attempted freedom, are turning with relief to tyranny; we must face and define all the weaknesses of our present social order; "above all, we must banish our complacency, recapture the spirit of an earlier day, fashion a truly challenging and realistic system of democracy, and take the offensive in applying the conception to the reconstruction of American society."

Dr. Counts's book is an essay in all these fields, which are ultimately the same field. The book includes a nine-point program for democratic action. The program is not summarized here because the nine points, without the richness which the context gives to them, might sound banal. They do not sound banal in Dr. Counts's book.

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Channel Fever

(Continued from page 12)

many other things he should have seen: things confidentially endeared, things of long suggestion.

How often the same must have happened when I was the visitor.

Scholastic Aptitude

I knew a young woman who had to take a Scholastic Aptitude Test to enter college. I tried to console her alarms by saying it was only an ingenious lot of trick questions, calculated to try her power of examining whether things really mean what they say; or say what they mean.

But I wondered secretly whether humanity itself has really shown any scholastic aptitude. Has it ever learned how to learn? Do I not see it again trying to persuade itself that what it resents or fears is the fault of One Man?

News from Out of Town

I did not hear from you; but I thought I knew a way to come close. I bought yesterday's newspaper from your distant city. At least I would know what News they told you; my eyes might travel the same shapes of print. I might surprise you (in secret) by knowing what you had thought.

It must have been an Off Day. The news in Yourtown seemed unimportant; I could not convince myself you had bothered yourself with it. I don't believe you read the paper yesterday?

Yet I don't know. . . . There was a piece about the wine-dreg pleated skirt and the new upswept hair-do. . . . It's a mistake to be too certain about what is important?

Floruit

In books of reference, when the editors don't exactly know a writer's dates, they put down "Floruit 1688" or something like that; usually assuming that he Flourished best about the age of 40.

It does me good to think that I must have Flourished, if ever, about anno 1930. . . . Was that what they call Flourishing? . . . I can see many a good grin aboard the Houseboat on the Styx.

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TENNYSON: "A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN."

At length I saw a lady within call,
Stiller than chiselled marble, standing there;
A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
And most divinely fair. . . .

. . . She, turning on my face
The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
Spoke slowly in her place.

Old Haven

By *DAVID CORNEL DEJONG*

The story of a willful generation, of modern youth in an ancient setting; an old village behind dykes on the North Sea depicted with the rich, mellow detail of a Dutch painting. In a racy modern style, DeJong tells the story of Tjerk Mellema, who broke with family traditions and turned, in the end, to a new life in America; of Antoinette, his unfettered and unspoiled bride who captivated Tjerk but set the family and the town by the ears; of Tjerk's wise, sharp-tongued grandmother, Great Beppe, and of many others — man and women of all classes, salty and picturesque. $2.50

Sailor *on* Horseback

By *IRVING STONE*

The life story of Jack London, novelist, sea rover, oyster pirate, gold miner, rich man, poor man, jailbird, drinker, temperance writer, revolutionist and adventurer; a fabulous, eccentric, and lovable personality, full of delicious humor and terrible rages, of genius and folly. It is written by the author of "Lust for Life," who says: "Jack London was a completely modern man — a time-bomb that smashed open the Twentieth Century. He was too great a character not to be able to have the truth told about him." Illus. $3.00

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Jack London, Wonder Boy

(*Continued from page 4*)

is a frontier attitude. And probably his obsession with the hero-myth, which among Americans has usually embodied itself in frontier terms, is partially derived from the same source. But the frontier has been much too exclusively emphasized in connection with American literature; one must not forget, particularly with Jack London, that other sources may be of considerably more consequence.

Of these I should like to suggest that for him the most significant is his relation with the lower middle class. In it he originated and grew up, and first and foremost he was its spokesman. If a census of his readers could be taken, I have no doubt a majority of them would be found there, especially in the white-collar group. To those whose lives are dreariest and most tedious, struggling to keep up appearances on the meagerest livelihood and maintain a precarious status, he offers the perfect vicarious satisfaction. His heroic phantasy is the compensatory myth above all of this class; to it his romantic naturalism is strong meat and drink. I do not know that it has been pointed out how much there is in London of a bastard nature-mysticism, of exulting in and worshiping and getting drunk on "the wine of life"—in short, of "blood-thinking." The very titles of his books are full of it. Although naturalism ends in pessimism, futility, and despair, it begins with rejoicing in strength, or strength through joy—*Kraft durch Freude,* to use the Nazi phrase. The turning of power to violence—Jack London's forte—in fighting, coercion, and destruction, is also the specialty of the lower middle class in its sporadic outbreaks, its happy reversions to savagery in lynchings and vigilante activities. By this time everybody ought to know that this trait of this class is, quite literally, the most dangerous thing in the world today: and what writer feeds it better than Jack London? No wonder he has been popular in Germany: most of his books might well be taught in the Nazi schools. Even the glorification of race is in them, if "Anglo-Saxon" were changed to "Nordic." As for his attacks on big business, they would have to be deleted now—but in the early days of the movement the Nazis would have applauded them. If there is such a thing as the "fascist unconscious"—and I fear there is—it is the product and property of the lower middle class, and Jack London shared it. Fortunately, it was only a part of him, though the major part of his work; also in him, in utter contradiction, were its opposites.

This conflict of opposites is clearest in what is nowadays by all odds his most interesting and important book: "The Iron Heel," published in 1907, the best anticipation of fascism yet written. Though sheer phantasy, not nearly so fully created and embodied as "It Can't Happen Here," "The Iron Heel" is a far better book because London understood the subject much better than Lewis, in spite of the greater knowledge available to Lewis. "The Iron Heel" represents a great feat of imagination; its only important omission is the part played by the lower middle class in fascism, and its prophecies are amazing, as for instance the role of the "labor aristocracy." The chieftains of the A. F. of L. would do well at this moment to read this book with searchings of heart. . . . "The Iron Heel" is not, however, the outcome of pure imagination working in a void. London had a good deal to go on. He knew the history of labor in the United States. He has his industrialist say to the socialist leader:

> When you reach out your vaunted strong hands for our palaces and purple ease, we will show you what strength is. In the roar of shell and shrapnel and the whine of machine-guns will our answer be couched. We will grind your revolutionists down under our heel, and we shall walk upon your faces. The world is ours, we are its lords, and ours it shall remain. As for labor, it has been in the dirt since history began, and in the dirt it shall remain so long as I and mine have the power.

The words are the words of Jack London, but the purport is the purport of—anybody can supply names.

London knew that always when labor had become active, it had been met and repressed with lawless violence. Before and during his day as much as in ours, labor in this country was met by fascism; "it has happened here," over and over again, that employers have hired private armies and aroused the lower middle class to beat and shoot the workers. So London had only to project the familiar phenomena of American life on a vaster scale into the future. Above all, moreover, he had only to project into the future what he found in himself; in his own mind and heart were all the ingredients of the conflict, the forces of his own time to which he was so responsive and which were headed towards the struggle he depicts: socialism and sympathy with organized labor on the one hand, on the other ruthless individualism and disregard of social welfare, and a passion for power and violence.

To estimate the value of Jack London's work is not easy. As pure literature it is small—but perhaps literature had better not be too pure. Perhaps it may be granted that so far as the social consciousness he claimed for himself appears in his writing, it is all to the good. There is much also to be said for his portrayal of the jejune, sterile character of traditional American culture. Furthermore, his criticisms of capitalism and business are not, to say the least, to be quickly dismissed. But as to the main features of his work—the phantasy of the primitive hero and the love of violence—it is hard to say. Many readers, no doubt, will decide that the heroes are stupid and the violence dangerous. And so they are. But can so widespread a myth be entirely without value? Must it not preserve something worth preserving, for which there is no room in actual life? Few people will take these blond beasts altogether seriously; but equally few would dare to have the elemental barbaric virtues they embody disappear from the world. Physical stamina, physical courage and endurance and hardihood—the "wild and free" strength which has so little place in our business civilization—surely these things are good in themselves, and there is no telling when we may need them again and need them badly.

The difficulty in estimating London, in-

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deed, is that the decision must depend largely on history as yet unmade. Much that seems at present deplorable, absurd in itself and vicious in its tendency—his primitivism and his violence—may turn out quite otherwise. Just now nothing seems worse than to encourage a general addiction to violence, and we hope no doubt never to have need of it. But no reader of "The Iron Heel" or of the daily papers in 1938 can help fearing that the day may come when physical prowess and a capacity for violence will be a man's most valuable traits. If so, that day will see Jack London's final vindication.

T. K. Whipple is on the faculty of the University of California, and is the author of "Spokesmen: Modern Writers and American Life."

Qualities of England

ENGLISH RUE. By Martin Hare. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM

MARTIN HARE excels in giving the quality of a place. "Enchanted Winter" caught the very texture of Irish life in a country rectory in County Cork. Succeeding novels drew Paris in relief as back-drop for days *en pension,* and stretched Poland into scale for adventuring interludes. In this latest novel it is England that unfolds. England pervades the story from beginning to end. Whether the characters are at home, conscious of the joy of English air and earth and sea, or whether they are on foreign soil and desolate at their loss, it is "England" that is written on their hearts.

"English Rue" is a novel of ample Victorian proportions. It tells its story in a slow-moving, savoring manner and one must fall into the humor to enjoy it. Opening with a nursery tea, governess and several sets of family children at hand, parents and uncles and aunts coming and going, the milieu is established at once. Two of the children, Nan Naseby and Roger Kendal, are marked to carry the star roles. They are destined for each other but first must go through the wilful apprenticeship of unsuccessful marriages, one ending in divorce, the other in a death which is to darken all the future.

The first section of the book is by far the happiest. Miss Hare is dexterous with children, and Nan as a child and young woman is a satisfying figure. After her marriage to Roger and their self-imposed exile, her character changes and loses its sureness. Towards the end, both the events and the emotions take on too fictitious a quality for a novel starting out so well oriented in reality. As in her earlier novels, Miss Hare peoples her scene and her plot with a wealth of diverting secondary characters. "English Rue" has enough people in it and enough minor stories to make up several novels. It is a book to become acquainted with slowly and to be enjoyed at leisure.

If *"modern civilization" were* crushed *tonight....*

. . . the scientists of 10,000 A.D. would find little evidence of how the "barbarians" of the 20th century lived. Skeletons of our skyscrapers and subways would be dug up, but our printed records and literature will have perished.

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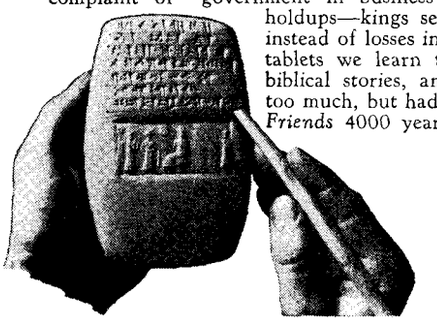

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The University of Chicago Press

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Advance Tip ★

from LEWIS GANNETT

(N. Y. Herald Tribune Books, Sept. 18)

"There are a few guaranteed plums on the autumn lists. It is exciting news that Richard Hughes, after nine long bookless years, has produced a successor to that deliciously outrageous story, 'High Wind in Jamaica,' née 'The Innocent Voyage.' (It was typical of the waywardness of the book that after a few years under one title it changed its name.) 'In Hazard' is a sea story; David Garnett, Desmond McCarthy, James Agate and Graham Greene, London critics, all matched it with Conrad's 'Typhoon'."

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History in Clay

THEY WROTE ON CLAY: THE BABYLONIAN TABLETS SPEAK TODAY. By Edward Chiera. Edited by George G. Cameron. The University of Chicago of Chicago Press. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by ASHTON SANBORN

FIVE thousand years hence, if archeologists of the future digging in the dust-heap of what was once New York City have the luck to uncover the huge Time Capsule which will have quietly rested under the site of the World's Fair Grounds, they may recover from within its hardened copper envelope a selected record of present-day achievements in science and art. But they will have far less satisfactory data from which to reconstruct a picture of our "modern" civilization than we ourselves possess for intimate knowledge of the powerful civilizations in ancient Mesopotamia derived from the many thousands of inscribed clay tablets unpremeditatedly bequeathed to us in the course of every-day transactions by people, some of whom lived as long as five thousand years ago.

Stone scarcely exists in Mesopotamia, nor could papyrus paper have survived burial in the damp soil of the country even if the reeds from which the Egyptians made this famous writing material had grown along the banks of the Two Rivers. The supply of clay, however, was inexhaustible, and from it human ingenuity, spurred by necessity, devised the unique and practically indestructible tablets on which, while the clay was moist, the wedge-shaped characters best adapted to the nature of the material could easily be inscribed with a pointed stylus. Through centuries of successive conquests several different languages appeared in the inscriptions, but the cuneiform style of writing naturally persisted.

The laws, religious rituals, myths and legends, inventories of temples and of estates, chronologies and victories of kings, commercial transactions of business men, contracts, wills, and correspondence of private individuals thus recorded in clay through the course of several millenniums open up new vistas into the remote past of human society. Moreover these records are not dull and lifeless, but often intimate and vivid to a degree not paralleled in the literature and inscriptions surviving from Greece and Rome, and occasionally they throw light on Biblical problems. They reveal a society not inferior in certain aspects to our own, and like our own already suffering from some of the chronic sicknesses of mankind,—the despotism of authority, the venality of justice, racketeering, war, and the persecution of minorities.

Professor Chiera's book, edited since his death by Dr. Cameron, presents the facts of a highly specialized type of scholarly research in a clear and exceptionally interesting manner for the layman. Many well-chosen illustrations add materially to its value.

Ashton Sanborn is a member of the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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THE PLATINUM CAT *Miles Burton* (Crime Club: $2.)	Calcined corpse in English cottage identified as possessor of valuable War secrets. Miles Burton and War office independently seek killer.	Interesting spectacle of several clever investigators reaching same conclusions by different methods, plus better than average international spy yarn.	Able
LYCANTHROPE *Eden Phillpotts* (Macmillan: $2.)	Signs and portents convince English lordling that werewolfery is his horrid fate. Discerning and skeptical friend gets at truth.	Old-fashioned and leisurely affair, with Gothic overtones and pleasant sense of seeing villainy get its just deserts.	Stuffy
THE YELLOW STRANGLER *Colin Robertson* (Hillman-Curl: $2.)	Throttling of London actress at private theatricals starts carnival of crime that Supt. Riley of Yard stops with difficulty.	"Diabolically clever" criminal in grotesque make-up kills, robs, and kidnaps in style that awes all but hardened reader.	Melodrama
MURDER À LA STROGANOFF *Caryl Brahms and S. Simon* (Crime Club: $2.)	Riviera murder of no-acct. blackmailer baffles sleuth Quill but fails to quell surrealistic exuberance of Ballet Stroganoff.	Almost maniacal mirth of balletomanes pushes mystery to rear, but for sheer lunacy tale touches an all-time high.	Phantasmagorical
MYSTERY AT HIDDEN HARBOR *Cortland Fitsimmons* (Stokes: $2.)	Double murder follows arrival of crime-investigators Ethel Thomas and Abbie Abernathy on storm-isolated Long Island summer colony.	Though temporarily hindered by general confessing-bee two canny females trace killings to proper party among many suspects.	Good

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Soviet Close-ups

IN SEARCH OF SOVIET GOLD. By John D. Littlepage and Demaree Bess. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by EUGENE LYONS

THE Soviet decade of 1928-37 was crowded with great industrial triumphs and greater human tragedies. It was the period in which a ruthless Stalinism, in a sense, conquered the Russian Revolution in its original phase to establish an industrialized State capitalism on a totalitarian political basis. Many foreigners have told the story of that decade, but with few exceptions they viewed the process from the outside. This book rehearses the same story from the inside. John D. Littlepage, a crackerjack American mining engineer, worked for the Kremlin's Gold Trust from 1928 through 1937. "In Search of Soviet Gold" is the record of his experiences and impressions, told in the first person, though written for him by Demaree Bess, for several years Moscow correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*.

The story, from the unique angle, adds little that is new to the literature about the U. S. S. R. But it provides significant "close-up" and "case study" elements to clarify the picture. Through the eyes of Mr. Littlepage the reader sees the Five Year Plans, the collectivization of farming, and other major events as tough realities rather than fancy ideas. The author saw specimens of indubitable sabotage by engineers and higher-ups in the government apparatus, and titanic confusion due to inexperience, bureaucratic red tape, police intrusion, and pervasive fear. He observed forced labor on a mass scale, fantastic hardships, near-starvation. But he also watched new industries taking shape despite everything, and participated in their shaping.

About two years ago Andrew Smith, in "I Was a Soviet Worker," also gave an inside view of Soviet industry in operation. Mr. Smith, having had some political and sociological training, went much farther and deeper in his understanding of the Soviet scene. But he had started out as a communist, and his book was in large measure a heart-rending account of disenchantment. Mr. Littlepage, on the contrary, is politically innocent, practically devoid of ideological bias or understanding. Where he ventures political judgments, he slides into the naive and even the preposterous. By the same token, however, his factual materials are the more impressive. And merely as a tale of personal adventure and observation, his book makes exciting reading.

On the whole the picture that emerges of Stalin's Russia is far from appetizing. "I am certainly no socialist," Mr. Littlepage writes, "and if I had been one it is quite possible that what I saw in Russia would have cured me." The most he can say for the armies of G. P. U. serfs working in the mines, on construction jobs, in the forests, is that "the inmates didn't live a very different life from ordinary Soviet citizens. . . . From the American viewpoint, all Soviet citizens are treated very much like prisoners on parole, especially since the old Tsarist passport system was revived in 1932."

When a portion of this book appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, the Left and liberal press pounced on Mr. Littlepage's assertion, based on personal impressions, that there was sabotage in high places in Russia. This helped them to swallow the extreme charges on the basis of which Stalin killed off his most important political opponents. A postscript to the book, however, takes the sting out of Mr. Littlepage's statements.

While the book was being written, it happens, the head of the Gold Trust, Professor A. P. Serebrovsky, was arrested. He was the man who invited the author to Russia and whom he got to know most intimately. That Professor Serebrovsky might be a saboteur seems to him fantastic: "He is an engineer, with the engineer's hatred for those who destroy machinery or natural resources." Is it any less fantastic that a revolutionist, an Old Bolshevik, with his lifelong hatred for capitalism and latterly for fascism, should become a spy for Hitler and the Mikado? If Professor Serebrovsky could not, in Mr. Littlepage's opinion, become a wrecker, neither could Bukharin or Rykov or Rakovsky become a fascist counter-revolutionary.

SKY ROAMING ABOVE TWO CONTINENTS

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The New Books

Fiction

THE HAPPY ISLAND. By Dawn Powell. Farrar & Rinehart. 1938. $2.50.

This is a clever, sometimes witty, always well-written book which turns out to be dull because all the people in it are so completely nasty that you don't care what happens to them, and the worst is too good. They are almost all members of what is known as café society, and Prudence Bly, the heroine—if such she can be called—is the star about which they revolve. Like her friends, Prudence in New York is a believable, if unsympathetic, character, but when she forsakes her glittering life to follow her stalwart and earthy first love back to Silver City (whence she sprang) the reader can only snort. Unsuccessful as the experiment turns out to be, Prudence, as Miss Powell has painted her, would never have made it. As a picture of a certain section of New York life this book is a huge success. As a novel it doesn't come off.

L. A.

THE CLEFT STICK. By Walter Greenwood. Stokes. 1938. $2.50.

There are fourteen stories and a biographical fragment in this collection. Most of them were written before Walter Greenwood rang the literary gong with "Love on the Dole." In a preface which tells how he came to be a writer—a preface remarkable for being less than three pages long—the author admits that while the magazine editors to whom these stories were submitted admired them, only one went so far as to publish.

It is not hard to see why. In addition to being uneven in both writing and insight, these are grim items. The author makes no effort to sugar his pills. The poor men and women of London about whom his stories are written, the mean streets and the coarse food that shelter and nourish them, are thrust under your nose with a "Smell that!" almost audible between the lines. What humor there is grates; it is harsh and bitter. And the reader is not allowed the mercy of disbelief, for there is conviction here, the conviction of a man writing the facts of his own immediate experience of life.

According to the publishers, Miss Edith Sitwell considers two of these sketches "the greatest short stories that have been produced in a hundred years." Frankly, this reader doesn't know which two she means, but "Patriotism," "A Maker of Books," "The Little Gold Mine," and the title story are all finished things of their sort. Mr. Wragg's numerous and striking black-and-whites ably reinforce the author's prevailing mood and treatment.

W. S.

Miscellaneous

CAN WOMEN BE GENTLEMEN? By Gertrude Atherton. Houghton Mifflin. 1938. $2.50.

Out of the snippets of her amazingly long and productive career, Mrs. Atherton has made a patchwork quilt of essays. Each piece recalls to the observer the time when the cloth was new; but unfortunately most of them come from dresses of a style so recent that they have not yet acquired quaintness and that one is still regretting one's last appearance in them.

Thus it is an unpleasant reminder of our intellectual adolescence to read an essay which describes us as living in an "enlightened age." When Mrs. Atherton speaks of the American business man who exists only for his business, we remember that that was indeed one of the war-cries of the Age of Babbitt; but Mrs. Babbitt is so delighted that her husband has some business to be absorbed in that she has long since discarded that naif complaint. Mrs. Atherton mentions with pride the work done for the advancement of culture by women's clubs composed of "intellectual women deeply interested in current history." She looks forward to the possibility of the DAR becoming a political power. In the genteel tradition, she still reverences the English; her final word on good manners is: "I never heard an English person of assured position make any reference to class. Their nearest approach was to say of some woman, 'She's—well—not quite a lady, don't you know?'"

Mrs. Atherton continues to uphold the doctrine of noblesse oblige: "*Even* the Junior League girls," she declares, "devote certain days of every week to clinics for poor children."

Those of her essays which give evidence of having been written in the last year or so show that she is still alert, still vigorous, still without the whine of the older generation which thinks that any younger generation must necessarily have gone to hell. Nevertheless, the reader who looks in vain for new expressions of old ideas will similarly fail to find any new ideas at all. One of her favorite words is "fighting." And it is as a fighter that one sees her; robust, impetuous, impatient of conventions, and utterly fearless. Perhaps her very independence is the reason why her arguments in favor of equal rights for women are so shadowy; one feels the contempt implicit in her chivalry.

K. S.

Travel

CARIBBEE CRUISE. By John W. Vandercook. Reynal & Hitchcock. 1938. $3.50.

You will feel—and you will be quite right—that John Vandercook has more than a mere cruising acquaintance with the Caribbean. The author of "Black Majesty" and several West Indian novels can be depended upon for accuracy in his observations and a vivid presentation of them. He has written here the history of the islands from the time of the earliest map, dated 1434, which placed approximately a few of them and incited Columbus to steal the glory of their obscure discoverers. Mr. Vandercook has known them all, as well as the South American "main," Bermuda and Panama, and he has described not only the by-paths one would expect of him, but the "sights" and historical monuments the stodgier tourist will admire. These he has made exceptionally interesting, for his perspective is larger than that of the average guide and the angle of it always unusual. He has seen what might be Voodoo working; he has lived sumptuously in the great hotels, and among the sad St. Kitts people who pay the harsh rent of a penny a month for their shacks beneath Mt. Misery, on a shore denuded purposely of food trees that might contribute to the black man's laziness.

It is regrettable that he has padded his chapters on such rather familiar ports as Cristobal, Panama, with such accounts, available everywhere, as that of the building of the Canal, and that he has skimped his personal adventures which are always significant. But he has done a good job, in good writing. Though the library of guide books, fine ones too, on the West Indies is already immense, Mr. Vandercook's "Caribbee Cruise" should have a prominent place in it, for it is livelier than most, and thoughtful and authoritative. The index is starred in reference to the author's valuation of scenes and dwellings. You will want this book for its pleasant reading, and at a penny a page as a guide it is cheap.

H. D.

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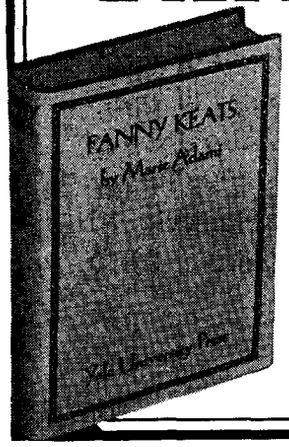

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

THE best brief conversations Old Q. ever has are with Paddy Farrelly in the office elevator. Paddy and Old Q. have just agreed that for the first time in history Ireland is the only country not in a state of war.

☞The Academy of American Poets has issued a pamphlet about *Incomes*, particularly those of poets. ☞They mean (they say) "Not the rhymester or poetaster, not the man of letters who may write occasional verse; but the man (or woman) unmistakably anointed by the muses, whom publishers will publish, critics seriously discuss." ☞Such a one, they suggest, has a probable maximum earning power, *as poet*, of $500 a year. ☞Up to the age of 52, poetry netted Edwin Arlington Robinson about $100 a year. ☞Society, concludes the Academy (after some interesting and sombre comments), pays its debt to the poet mostly in laurel; but "Laurel is not convertible into bread and meat." ☞The Academy, whose address is 435 East 52 Street, N. Y. C., solicits discussion of the problem and would be glad to enroll sustaining members.

☞The remarkable collection of books and pamphlets by Cunninghame Graham ("Don Roberto") and materia critica about the same, gathered through fifteen years by Herbert F. West, has been given by Mr. West to the Dartmouth College Library. It includes 126 letters in Cunninghame Graham's handwriting which cover no less than 660 MS. pages. ☞It is a great pleasure to see Mary Webb's *Precious Bane* now included in the Modern Library, with the preface by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin (written exactly ten years ago) which was her first introduction to a larger public. ☞One of the things publishers and reviewers forget is the extreme slowness with which fine things make their way. Recently we were at a summer cottage in the Blue Ridge where we found people revelling in the new discovery of Mrs. Webb and hailing her sensitive talent with delight. A wife had given her husband (a tobacco merchant) the handsome illustrated edition of Mary Webb's books as a birthday present and they were enjoying them together. ☞In the same mountain retreat we found with delight in the posthumous essays of E. R. Sill his piece on Taming a Humming Bird; and a book bearing the imprint of one of Philadelphia's Forgotten Publishers, whose name we had never known —Perkinpine & Higgins. ☞Also a favorite of our childhood, Mrs. Gatty's *Parables from Nature* with the excellent little sermon "On Purring When You're Pleased." ☞For reasons of his own, Old Q. was driving up through Connecticut and verified his observation that the Rain Barrel, in Granby, Conn., is the only tea room known to him that always keeps pipe-cleaners on the mantel for the succor of masculine guests. ☞We had the pleasure of seeing Miss Dodd and Miss Hoffman, at the Hampshire Bookshop in Northampton, busily preparing for the new college year. The Hampshire Bookshop has a portrait of John Milton as a boy which shows that at the age of ten he had reddish hair. ☞We suggested to Miss Dodd that since she has sold so many copies of Ivan Sanderson's delightful *Animal Treasure* she invite that skilful artist to do a drawing of the symbolic *Book Scorpion* which is the shop's emblem of luck. ☞Among the books at Morrow House (Smith College) which were given to the dormitory because they were loved by Elisabeth Morrow Morgan are *Precious Bane* and *Trivia*.

☞A. B. Shiffrin, himself a bookseller (the Academy Bookshop, in New York City) is the author of a novel about school-teachers, *Told Out of School*, to be published next week by Little, Brown.

☞Mrs. Dwight Smith (Bellingham, Wash.) very kindly sends a transcript of the music for *Ilkla Moor*. She says she and her husband learned the song from two young Yorkshire school-teachers while on a trip to Denmark. "By the time we had spent two weeks in Denmark our whole houseparty of sixty—only two Americans in the lot—were harmonizing Ilkla Moor for the delight of every train and bus and boat." ☞Mrs. Smith adds that the song may be had on *His Master's Voice* record B 4339. ☞Ralph Thompson, well known to the Trade for his reviews in the N. Y. *Times*, now also conducts the department of Outstanding Novels in the *Yale Review* (quarterly).

☞Of the many interesting books about doctors there is one, *A Doctor's Odyssey*, by A. G. Beaman ($2.50), which we see mentioned in the lists of the Johns Hopkins Press, and which is probably not as widely known as it deserves. Its subtitle is attractive: "A Sentimental Record of Le Roy Crummer: Physician, Author, Bibliophile, Artist in Living, 1872-1934." ☞October 1st the Chiswick Book Shop moves from 51 Street to new quarters at 2 East 46. Until September 30 they offer ⅓ off all prices marked in their current catalogue. For instance the Oxford Press edition of Jane Austen (1923), edited by R. W. Chapman, limited and o. p., for $25 less ⅓ sounds like a gorgeous buy.

☞Mrs. Hendee Rice (Hartford, Conn.), referring to a note here (some months ago) about Limericks, suggests that the name of that verse-form is due to its being in the same meter as the old Irish song "Oh won't you come up to Limerick." ☞Mrs. Rice adds that in London this summer the following was current:—

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Double-Crostics: No. 235

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

■	1-P	2-I	3-A	4-L	5-C	■	6-S	7-O	8-G	9-Y	10-R	11-J	12-Q	13-B	■
14-S	15-I	16-G	17-B	18-D	19-W	■	20-Z	21-W	22-O	23-C	24-H	■	25-V	26-E	27-U
28-L	29-Q	30-Y	31-A	32-N	33-I	34-X	■	35-X	36-D	37-G	■	38-O	39-Z	40-R	41-N
42-L	43-M	44-J	45-T	■	46-X	47-C	■	48-M	49-H	50-D	51-K	■	52-Y	53-P	54-J
55-Q	56-G	57-W	58-N	■	59-U	60-N	61-I	62-F	■	63-E	64-Z	65-O	66-W	■	67-J
68-T	69-D	70-C	■	71-Q	72-F	73-X	74-O	■	75-J	76-K	■	77-F	78-M	79-I	80-H
■	81-P	82-W	83-O	84-Q	85-I	86-S	■	87-F	88-P	89-U	90-G	■	91-I	92-F	93-P
94-N	95-T	96-G	97-V	■	98-B	99-A	100-H	101-K	■	102-Z	103-W	104-A	105-L	■	106-D
107-C	■	108-W	109-G	110-A	111-M	■	112-E	113-H	■	114-J	115-K	116-X	■	117-L	118-Q
119-U	120-J	121-Z	122-E	123-B	124-M	125-R	126-I	■	127-S	128-Q	129-O	130-C	131-U	132-N	133-B
■	134-G	135-E	136-F	■	137-I	138-E	139-Z	140-Q	141-J	142-R	■	143-P	144-V	145-H	146-K
147-O	148-V	149-B	■	150-X	151-E	■	152-P	153-X	154-K	155-G	■	156-K	157-S	158-V	159-J
■	160-U	161-P	162-D	■	163-K	164-C	■	165-T	166-N	167-U	168-F	■	■	■	■

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-six words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 15 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. One of the Canterbury Pilgrims.

B. Most peculiar.

C. American composer (1884-1920).

D. Irish variant of Helen.

E. Novel by D. H. Lawrence.

F. Husband of Alcestis (Gr. myth.).

G. Jews descended from former Jews in Spain and Portugal.

H. Inclined to chirp.

I. American author (1898—).

J. Hero of Shaw play (1912).

K. Nonsense, folly.

L. Abounds.

M. Character in "Adam Bede."

N. Notable.

O. Bitterly severe.

P. Disciplines.

Q. Character in "The Winter's Tale."

R. Solely.

S. Forebodings.

T. Calling troops into service.

U. Regardful.

V. Greek fabulist (about 560 B.C.)

W. English "Lake poet."

X. Musical composition in free fantasia style.

Y. Unit of measure for printed matter (pl.).

Z. Lax.

WORDS

104 3 31 99 110

98 149 133 17 13 123

130 70 23 107 164 5 47

50 106 18 162 69 36

26 122 138 135 112 151 63

92 136 87 168 77 72 62

90 155 56 109 134 96 37 8 16

24 49 100 113 145 80

2 79 91 33 61 85 137 15 126

54 114 159 44 67 11 141 120 75

154 163 101 115 146 76 156 51

28 42 105 117 4

78 124 43 48 111

132 41 166 94 60 58 32

22 7 83 65 74 147 129 38

81 53 143 161 1 88 93 152

29 12 55 71 128 118 84 140

40 10 125 142

157 127 86 14 6

165 95 68 45

59 27 89 119 167 160 131

25 148 97 158 144

66 103 21 108 82 57 19

150 153 73 34 35 116 46

9 30 52

121 39 20 64 102 139

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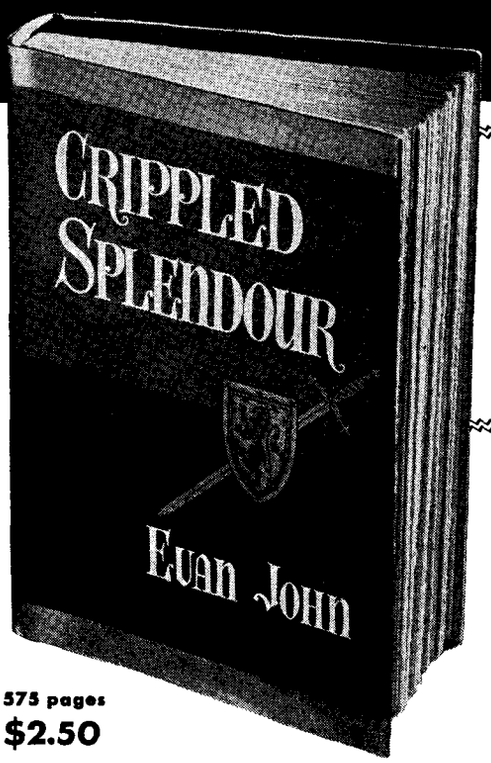

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